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44. As shown in Figs. 2 and 4, each of the bulkheads 46 has a generally planar body portion that substantially fills the cross-section of the hollow area of its respective side sill assembly 14 or 16. One or more ribs may be formed in the body portion of each bulkhead 46 to rigidify the body portion. For more information related to side sill assemblies and bulkheads, reference should be made to commonly-assigned U.S. Patent Application No. 10/683,777, filed 10/10/03, the disclosure of which is expressly incorporated herein in its entirety.

[0016] In the illustrated and preferred embodiment, each end of the front support assembly 30 includes a pair of bulkheads 46 disposed between the outer side sill member 54 and the inner side sill member 52. Similarly, each end of the mid support assembly 32 includes a single bulkhead 46 between the inner and outer side sill members 52, 54, and each end of the rear support assembly 34 includes a pair of bulkheads 46 disposed between the inner and outer side sill members 52, 54. The bulkheads 46 serve to stiffen the side sill assemblies 14, 16, and to transfer energy from the outer side sill members 54 to the inner side sill members 52 and, ultimately, to the outriggers 48, frame members 40, 42, and cross member 50, as will be apparent from the following description.

[0017] The outriggers 48 extend between the inner side sill member 52 and the associated first or second frame member 40, 42 and are oriented in a direction generally transverse to the vehicle axis 44 and the frame members 40, 42 and generally parallel to the bulkhead 46. The outriggers 48 are preferably generally U-shaped in cross section, having upwardly-directed arms that are connected to one another by a base wall at a lower end thereof. Ends of the outriggers 48 are secured to the